AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A method for preparing an endocervical fluid sample or a vaginal fluid sample obtained from a human patient for performing a diagnostic immunoassay method to detect whether the patient has been infected with an infectious agent, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

a) treating the endocervical fluid sample or the vaginal fluid sample with an agent to reduce an inhibitory effect of the sample on the diagnostic **immunoassay** method, wherein the agent reduces direct inhibition of antibody-antigen interaction by components of the sample **by one or more selected from the group consisting of: (i) neutralizing components of the sample that physically block antibody-antigen interaction, (ii) neutralizing components which sequester the antigen or which modify charges on the antibody adversely affecting its affinity for the antigen, (iii) reducing inhibition of antibody-antigen interaction by making antigen available for antibody detection, and (iv) reducing** ~~**or wherein the agent reduces**~~ viscosity of the sample **by degrading nucleic acids present in the sample**; and

b) performing the diagnostic immunoassay method in the presence of DNase **activity**.

2. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the DNase is present in an amount selected from the group consisting of: (i) more than 0.5 μg/ml and (ii) 0.5 to 100 μg/ml.

3. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the DNase is present in an amount selected from the group consisting of: (i) more than 1.5 units of activity per ml and (ii) 1.5 to 300 units activity per ml.

4. (Previously presented) A method according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the

sample is treated with an oxidizing agent.

5. (Original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the oxidizing agent is hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2).

6. (Original) A method according to claim 5 using a working concentration of hydrogen peroxide of 0.5% to 3% w/v.

7. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 1, wherein the sample is treated with a non-ionic alkyl glucoside surfactant.

8. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 7 wherein the surfactant is n-dodecyl maltoside.

9. (Withdrawn) A method according to claim 8 wherein the n-dodecyl maltoside is present at a working concentration selected from the group consisting of: (i) 0.01% to 0.04% w/v and (ii) 0.015% to 0.03% w/v.

10. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the sample is treated with either or both of Polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) and Polyvinyl pyrrolidone (PVP).

11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 10, wherein the sample is treated with PVA at a working concentration of between 0.01 and 0.5% w/v, wherein the PVA has an average molecular weight between 20 and 25 kDa.

12. (Original) A method according to claim 10 wherein the sample is treated with PVP at a working concentration between 0.2% and 2% w/v.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the human

patient sample is obtained as a self-collected vaginal swab sample.

15. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is for detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

16. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the patient sample is a self-collected vaginal swab sample and the method is for detection of *Chlamydia trachomatis*.

17. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the method is a dipstick test method.

18. (Withdrawn) A kit comprising: a dipstick test apparatus for carrying out a specific infectious agent detection test; reagents required for said apparatus in order to carry out said specific detection tests; a DNase reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 3.

19. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: an oxidizing agent reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 4 to 6.

20. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a non-ionic alkyl glucoside reagent for carrying out the method of any of claims 7 to 9.

21. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a reagent which is PVA and/or PVP for carrying out the method of any of claims 10 to 12.

22. (Withdrawn) A kit according to claim 18 additionally comprising: a non-ionic alkyl glucoside surfactant reagent as defined in any of claims 4 to 6 and a PVA and/or PVP reagent as defined in any of claims 7 to 9 for carrying out the method of any of claims 1 to 15.